



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 19, 2022

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission

FROM: Brad Hess, Principal Project Manager

SUBJECT: De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Project Concept Design Update Number 3

The purpose of this report is to provide the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) with a thorough update on the details that have allowed the De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Project (Project) concept design to progress, without spending precious time at the hearing presenting the information. Staff hopes this information will be helpful and will focus the questions for the presentation on the latest concept design for revitalizing De La Guerra Plaza (DLG Plaza).

RECAP OF PROJECT PROCESS:

This Project began in early 2019, and on March 9, 2019, the first community outreach meeting was held at Casa De La Guerra. The description and results from that meeting have been presented to the HLC previously in the Staff Report of May 7, 2021 ([HERE](#)) for the joint work session with the De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Design Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee). It is important to note that this initial community outreach helped establish the many touchpoints expressed by the community regarding how DLG Plaza could look, function, facilitate activities, and be a catalyst for activating this area of Downtown Santa Barbara.

Later in 2019, at the request of staff, Council formed the De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Design Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee), and the first meeting was held on November 8, 2019. The Advisory Committee includes two members each from Council, the Planning Commission, the HLC, and the Parks and Recreation Commission, as well as the Executive Director from the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, and the General Manager from the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers' Market. The original roster included the new mayor, Randy Rowse, who was at that time a Councilmember and who has continued to be an enthusiastic supporter of this project. The current roster is as follows:

City Council

Kristen Sneddon, Chair
Meagan Harmon

Planning Commission

Lesley Wiscomb, Vice Chair
New Appointee to replace Barrett Reed

Parks and Recreation Commission

Beebe Longstreet
New Appointee to replace Roger Perry

Historic Landmarks Commission

Michael Drury
Steve Hausz

Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation

Dr. Anne Peterson

Santa Barbara Farmers' Market Assoc.

Sam Edelman, General Manager

Once it was clear that the Farmers' Market would not be relocating its Saturday market to DLG Plaza, the General Manager for the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers' Market Association did not continue to attend the meetings. Since that time, the other nine members of the Advisory Committee have met and guided the conceptual design process. The Advisory Committee has met 12 times over the past 25 months, most recently on November 8, 2021. To view the last meeting, please follow the link [HERE](#). At the third meeting, the Advisory Committee established a Purpose Statement for the Project that has provided guidance and is the filter through which all ideas and concepts are considered. It reads:

"De La Guerra Plaza celebrates and honors the historic heart of our city and provides the flexibility to serve our community's diverse social, cultural, historic, economic and environmental vitality."

The past 25 months involved an intensive process of studies, discussions, presentations, considerations, and design iterations. This complicated and important project still requires much more of the same process before it is ready to break ground. The following areas described below have had considerable work done, but will still require further effort.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

One of the important variables of DLG Plaza is what is underground. Applied Earthworks (AE) prepared a Phase I Archaeological Resources Report (Report) in 2011, which included limited subsurface testing within DLG Plaza. The Report concluded that given the level of planned disturbance extending between one to ten inches in the area of grading, three feet in depth for utility trenches, and up to six feet for the planting of new palm trees, the Project proposed at that time had the potential to significantly impact important and/or unique historical archaeological remains. The Phase I Report was accepted by the HLC on August 17, 2011.

In 2019, after a competitive Request for Proposals process, Council awarded a contract with AE to complete a Phase 2 investigation at DLG Plaza. During excavation in April of 2019, resources were discovered, and a Phase 2 Report was prepared by AE and accepted by the HLC on March 4, 2020.

Ongoing collaboration between the design team and AE, in coordination with the Advisory Committee, is expected throughout the development of the conceptual design. AE will conclude the current scope with the development of a Phase 3 Work Plan that will detail mitigation efforts to protect cultural resources during the construction of the Project, based on the conceptual design. The Phase 3 Work Plan will require review and approval by the HLC.

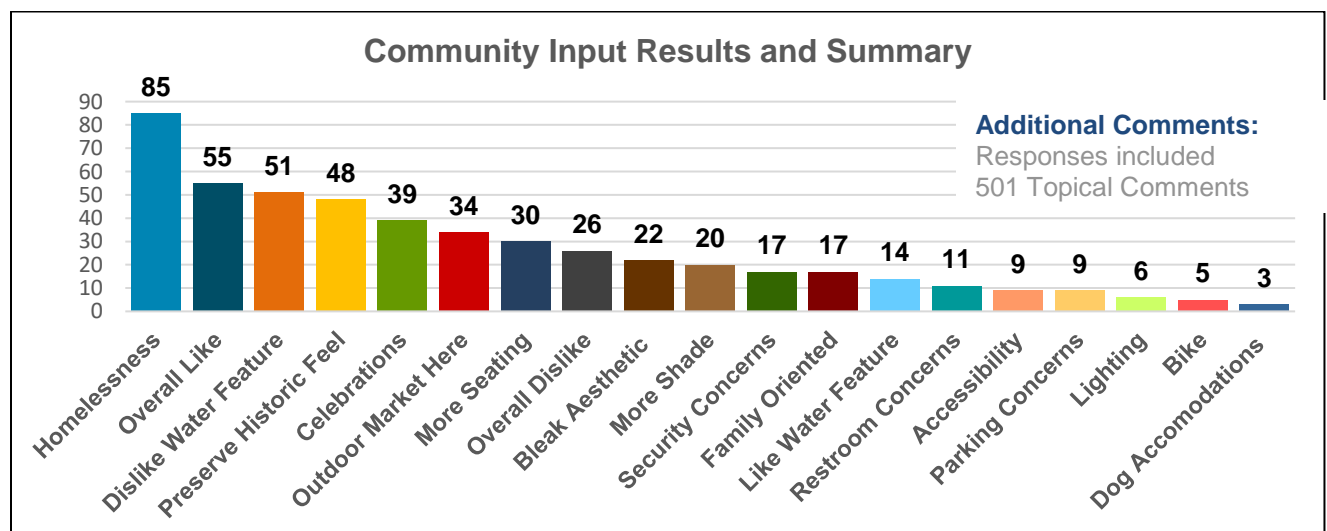
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As was detailed in the previous Staff Reports, there have been and continue to be outreach efforts to the community, beginning in March of 2019 with the initial public workshop. In addition to the list provided in the previous Staff Report of stakeholders, businesses, and groups contacted since the last meeting with the HLC, an online community questionnaire was

conducted for two weeks during October 14 – 28, 2021. The focus of the questionnaire was to confirm if the Project is still consistent with the desires of the community given the changes to the Downtown area due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the changes to State Street, different traffic patterns, and the commencement of the State Street Master Plan. The salient summary points from the 342 responses to the questionnaire are as follows:

- 85% of respondents see the changes to State Street complementing the goals for the DLG Plaza.
- A majority of respondents wanted activities taking place at the DLG Plaza, including festivals, events, music, entertainment, concerts, and leisure activities, such as strolling and sitting.
- 36% of respondents live in the Downtown area.
- Shopping, dining, and recreation were the top three reasons for people to visit the Downtown area.
- 44% thought that a guided tour would benefit elementary schools, visitors, and residents.
- Two-thirds rated revitalizing DLG Plaza as “Significant” to “Extremely Significant”.

Additionally, respondents had the opportunity to add an optional response to the question “Are there any additional thoughts you’d like to share?” Of the 342 respondents that responded to this question, there were 501 topical comments ranging from compliments to complaints, with the most concern regarding how to address the homeless issue in the DLG Plaza and Downtown area. The frequency of topics mentioned is depicted in the following diagram presented at the last Advisory Committee meeting:



The conclusions from the questionnaire were:

- We are on the right track;
- We need to continue to develop and refine the plans; and
- The concerns raised by the survey are noted, and we will do what we can to mitigate some of the societal issues surrounding DLG Plaza and the immediate area.

TRAFFIC STUDY:

Subsequent to the last HLC presentation, staff worked with Associated Transportation Engineers (ATE) to update the Transportation and Parking Conditions Report conducted in 2019. A 2021 Study Update was conducted in July and was compared to a June 2019 Study. Both studies compared traffic counts and parking availability, and the 2021 Study Update also determined the destinations of those who parked in the Plaza. During the pandemic and the closure of State Street, these parking and traffic patterns changed, and this study helped appraise the “new normal” of this space.

Some key points from the 2021 Study Update were as follows:

2021 Average Daily Traffic Volume:

- 1,950 – 2,500 cars (varies by day)
- 30 delivery trucks (weekdays)
- Approximately 40% - 60% of vehicles entered DLG Plaza, circled, and exited when no parking space was available.

The closure of State Street has reduced traffic volume in the DLG Plaza:

- Weekday mornings: 60% reduction
- Weekday afternoons: 15% reduction
- Saturday: 20% reduction

Additionally, it is important to determine if there is capacity in the surrounding parking structures that can absorb vehicles that might normally find a parking space at DLG Plaza. The following table from the last Advisory Committee shows the data comparison of Parking Lot 2 (North side of Paseo Nuevo), Lot 9 (Lobero), and Lot 10 (Ortega).

Parking Lot Peak Occupancy Comparison

Day	2019	2021	Difference
Monday-Thursday	59% full	33% full	-26%
Friday	64% full	34% full	-30%
Saturday	59% full	41% full	-18%
Sunday	42% full	32% full	-10%

**Numbers include City Lots 2, 9, and 10 combined*

The conclusions drawn from the study are as follows:

- The destination of most people (70%-87%) parking in DLG Plaza area is State Street.

- City parking lots that serve the State Street corridor (2, 9, and 10) currently have ample capacity to absorb the loss of +/- 60 spaces in the DLG Plaza area. These lots are all within two blocks of the Project.
- Delivery vehicles will be accommodated, and staff will work with the Parking and Transportation Division for solutions.
- Short-term parking is desirable adjacent to City Hall.

In conjunction with the ATE study summarized above, staff requested a formal review of the concept plan from the Parking and Transportation Division to help refine the design and better understand concerns. This was completed; several design modifications were made as a result and are shown in the updated plans. The intersections at State Street and De La Guerra Street, and Anacapa Street and De La Guerra Street, have both been revised to better accommodate traffic, pedestrians, and the pedestrian-only concept for DLG Plaza. The parking spaces on De La Guerra Street on the Anacapa side were studied and modified accordingly to accommodate both cars and commercial vehicles with enough space to allow turning around after deliveries have been made, or if parking is not available and a vehicle needs to turn around and exit. Bollard locations have also been modified to help facilitate these changes. This formal review by the Parking and Transportation Division would normally be a part of the Pre-Application Review Team (PRT) Submittal process, but given the importance of this issue, the request was made in advance of the PRT Submittal. This review by the Parking and Transportation Division, as well as other reviews as part of the PRT process, will be submitted to the HLC for its review and confirmation.

DESIGN REVISIONS:

Based on the robust discussion at the joint work session the HLC held with the Advisory Committee in May 2021, as well as input that was received from the Advisory Committee meetings, public comments, the parking and traffic evaluations, and from the community input questionnaire, staff will present the revised conceptual plans at the HLC meeting on January 19, 2022. As part of this review, staff and the design team have requested from Post-Hazeltine a memorandum articulating its review of this concept plan. Post-Hazeltine has been a valued consultant throughout the concept design process and in addition to the memorandum will also provide a Phase 2 Historic Structures/Sites Report.

In addition to the intersection changes mentioned above, there have been several developments within each of the design features. As the design features have been refined over time, staff and the design team is also acutely aware that each of the features needs to be consistent with the compatibility requirements (per SBMC 30.220.020.F.), which are:

1. *Consistency with Design Guidelines.* The design of the project is consistent with El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District design guidelines applicable to the location of the project within the City;
2. *Compatible with Architectural Character of City and Neighborhood.* The design of the project is compatible with the desirable architectural qualities and characteristics which are distinctive of Santa Barbara and the particular neighborhood surrounding the project;

3. *Appropriate size, mass, bulk, height, and scale.* The size, mass, bulk, height, and scale of the project is appropriate for its location and its neighborhood;
4. *Sensitivity to Adjacent Landmarks and Historic Resources.* The design of the project is appropriately sensitive to adjacent Federal, State, or City Landmarks or other nearby designated historic resources, including City structures of merit, sites, or natural features;
5. *Public Views of the Ocean and Mountains.* The design of the project responds appropriately to established scenic public vistas; or
6. *Use of Open Space and Landscaping.* The project includes an appropriate amount of open space and landscaping.

The following descriptions of what has been revised will serve as a supplement to the visuals and presentation to provide deeper context and understanding.

Arcade:

The previous discussion with the HLC regarding the Arcade included what type of structure it should be, whether it should have a flat roof, a gable roof, or be a pergola, and whether the arches should be rounded like City Hall or rectangular. After much consideration, the design team feels the design that best meets the compatibility requirements is one with arches, a red tile gable roof, corbels on the columns, lamps centered on each column and in the center, and high-lit ceilings inside. Additionally, the back “panels” of each end of the Arcade will be solid and will allow screening of the electrical panel on the north end and potential storage on the South end. Both panels will allow for locations for art, historical, or cultural representation on the interior of the Arcade. Physically, the Arcade will be askew from City Hall to emulate the angle of the Yorba-Abadie Adobe that was present there. The Arcade’s design has been revised to include a ramp on the north end for access into the Arcade and onto the stage. The stage remains the same size that can accommodate small venues, but the stage area can accommodate larger stages brought in using the Arcade as the backdrop.

Restrooms:

As was presented at the last meeting, staff has been discussing with the owners of 726 State Street the potential for using the Iron Works portion of the building (the single-story portion facing the Plaza) for a pump room for the water feature and an extension of the restrooms off of Storke Placita. Unfortunately, this idea proved an impossibility for the parties to come to terms for several reasons that need to remain confidential. As a result, the pump room and restrooms will be located on Storke Placita adjacent to 726 State Street. Due to the recent failure of negotiations, there are only sketches and concepts to present at the meeting.

Water Feature:

The concept of an in-ground water feature provides several positive outcomes. The first being, the design will aesthetically complement the historic space with its quatrefoil shape. It will also provide cooling to the air surrounding it, white noise for those in closer proximity, and entertainment with a pleasant focus much like a fireplace. It also addresses the health and safety concerns with a limitation of the height that each spout will make and a lower water volume. It will be controlled operationally so that it will not interfere with any planned events at

DLG Plaza. Lastly, many respondents to the questionnaire were concerned about the optics of a “fountain” when the City seems to be constantly in a drought. The water feature will operate on a pump system whereby the water used is stored in a below-grade tank, filtered before exiting, and then is collected back into the loop to be filtered and used again. The small amount of water loss is primarily due to evaporation.

Lighting Plan:

The lighting plan previously presented to the HLC was based on a uniform layout of trees and tree wells within the plaza. With the new layout of tree wells placed in a more random fashion and confirmation from the HLC, the lighting plan will be revised and refined to the current plan. This will be part of the next concept plan iteration and part of the PRT Submittal.

Landscape Plan:

The front of City Hall landscape plan will continue to be refined to be a model landscape that is beautiful, sustainable, and welcoming and these traits will be carried into the Plaza space at the edges and in the tree wells. These landscape plans will be refined prior to the PRT Submittal.

Site Furnishings:

The site furnishings that will be present in the plan as part of the PRT Submittal will include trash receptacles, benches, drinking fountains, bike racks, and plaques. The site furnishings will be included as part of the overall plan and part of the PRT Submittal.

Storm Water Management Plan:

Earth Systems conducted several tests in DLG Plaza in 2019 that included a percolation test, soils test, and tests to determine the depth of the water table. The soil in the top (approximately) twenty feet is dense clay and has close to zero percolation. Any permeable surface materials will be selected for aesthetics only and not as part of permeability calculations. As such, the Storm Water Management Plan will include catch basins, dry wells, and other means to address the water on the site. This study will be primarily handled by the civil engineer in conjunction with the design team in the next phase of documents as part of the Planning Application submittal.

Art and Cultural Representation Plan:

This plan will be critical to the success of the project. Multiple groups will need to be a part of this endeavor and it is the intention to have the Santa Barbara office of Arts and Culture oversee the process and work with the design team to document the plan. Additionally, the Advisory Committee desires to help guide the parameters of the Art and Cultural Representation Plan by providing over-arching direction, guidelines for potential art locations, dimensions for certain elements, such as in-ground medallions, where different themes could be represented within a consistently sized space, and to help ensure the plan meets expectations. It is anticipated that this plan will be refined as part of the Planning Application process and run concurrently with the Archaeological Plan implementation.

CONCLUSION:

Thank you in advance for your time and efforts, and we look forward to receiving input from the HLC on (i) the Arcade Architecture, (ii) the direction of the City Hall Landscape Plan, (iii) the proposed architecture of the pump room and restrooms, and (iv) the overall readiness to submit to PRT.